

Message Text

SECRET

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

DRAFTED BY NEA:ARDAY:BDF

APPROVED BY THE SECRETARY

NEA:ALATHERTON

S/S - M.TANNER

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TO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

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NODIS

FOR THE AMBASSADOR FROM THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, SY

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION

1. YOU SHOULD TELL ALLON THAT WE RECEIVED A NOTE FROM THE SOVIETS ON APRIL 2 REFERRING TO AMERICAN NAVAL VESSELS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN. THE SOVIETS HAVE ALREADY PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED THE NOTE, WHICH IMPLIES THAT UNITS OF THE SIXTH FLEET ARE IN THE AREA FOR PURPOSES OF INTERVENING IN LEBANON. WE ARE REPLYING TO THE SOVIETS THAT ALL RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENTS SHOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO PREVAIL UPON THE FACTIONS IN LEBANON TO SEEK A POLITICAL SOLUTION AND REFRAIN FROM FURTHER FIGHTING; THAT WE WILL DO ALL WE CAN TO T;IS END; AND THAT WE ARE CONFIDENT, SO LONG AS OTHERS EXERCISE SIMILAR RESTRAINT, THAT THE DANGERS OF THE PRESENT SITUATION DEVELOPING INTO A WIDER CONFLICT CAN BE AVERTED. WE ARE ALSO REMINDING THE SOVIETS OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO PRESS FOR RESTRAINT ON THE PART

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OF THOSE LEBANESE PARTIES THAT THEY SUPPORT, DIRECTLY OR

INDIRECTLY.

2. TELL ALLON THAT WE ASSUME THE SOVIET NOTE IS INTENDED TO INTIMIDATE US BUT THAT, OF COURSE, IT WILL HAVE NO SUCH EFFECT. OUR FLEET UNITS ARE IN THE AREA FOR THE POSSIBLE PURPOSES OF EVACUATION, IF FIGHTING SHOULD BE RENEWED AND THE SITUATION DETERIORATES TO THAT POINT, AND AS A

WARNING TO THE SOVIETS.

3. I WOULD LIKE ALLON TO KNOW THAT, IN OUR VIEW, THE COMING WEEK OR TWO IN LEBANON COULD BE QUITE DECISIVE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRENT CRISIS. MAJOR POLITICAL MOVES MUST BE AGREED ON AND MADE BY THE LEBANESE GROUPS, WHO HAVE NEVER SHOWN MUCH SPIRIT OF COMPROMISE IN SUCH SITUATIONS. THE TEMPTATION, PARTICULARLY ON THE PART OF THE LEFTISTS UNDER JUMBLATT, TO RENEW THE CONFLICT FOR PURPOSES OF FORCING GREATER CONCESSIONS FROM THE OTHER SIDE WILL BE GREAT. WE ARE URGING THE GOVERNMENTS WITH SOME INFLUENCE ON THE CONTENDING FACTIONS TO DO ALL THEY CAN TO PRESS THEM TOWARD COMPROMISE AND AWAY FROM FURTHER FIGHTING. IF THE PRESENT CEASEFIRE SHOULD BREAK DOWN SERIOUSLY, IT MAY BE VERY DIFFICULT TO PREVENT A MAJOR SYRIAN INTERVENTION.

4. IN THIS SITUATION, WHERE THE JUMBLATT COALITION IS MILITARILY STRONGER THAN THE CHRISTIAN, ENCOURAGEMENT AND STRENGTHENING OF THE CHRISTIAN HAND COULD WORK IN THE DIRECTION OF A POLITICAL SOLUTION BASED ON A UNIFIED LEBANON. IT WOULD GIVE THE CHRISTIANS AN IMPROVED BARGAINING POSITION AND DISCOURAGE LEFTIST RESORT TO FORCE. THIS WILL BE THE CASE, HOWEVER, ONLY IF THE CHRISTIANS USE THEIR IMPROVED POSITION TO BARGAIN WITH. WE BELIEVE ISRAELIS MAY HAVE IMPRESSION THAT SOME CHRISTIANS WOULD USE A STRENGTHENED POSITION AS A BASIS TO CREATE PARTITION. WE ARE CONVINCED THIS WOULD LEAD TO FURTHER CONFLICT AND INTERVENTION, WITH THE MOST SERIOUS RESULTS FOR ALL OF US. IF THIS MATTER COMES UP IN ANY OF YOUR DISCUSSIONS, YOU SHOULD HAVE THIS DISTINCTION CLEARLY IN MIND.

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5. YOU SHOULD NOT DISCUSS THE FOREGOING WITH ANYONE BUT ALLON (OR OF COURSE RABIN), AND YOU SHOULD TELL HIM IT MUST BE CLOSELY HELD.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTERVENTION, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, ARMISTICE, DIPLOMATIC NOTES, NAVAL SHIPS, POLITICAL SITUATION, DISSIDENT FACTIONS, CAT-C
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE081259
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: ARDAY:BDF
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P840093-1826
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760499/aaaadhaz.tel
Line Count: 112
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 OCT 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: WITHDRAWN <21 JUN 2004 by izenbei0, 3.4.X6>; RELEASED <07 OCT 2004 by buchant0>; APPROVED <18 OCT 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANESE SITUATION
TAGS: PFOR, MOPS, LE, SY, UR, US, (ALLON, YIGAL)
To: TEL AVIV BEIRUT DAMASCUS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006